

THE ATTITUDES OF THE INTERNET USERS TOWARDS THE JANUARY UPRISING



MAREK SZALKIEWICZ

Social and Human Sciences Faculty, Witelon State University
of Applied Sciences, Sejmowa Street 5, Legnica, Poland.

E-mail address: marekszalkiewicz1990@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

One of the most important events in XIX century Europe was the January Uprising. This late flurry of nationalities was written up in history as a Polish bushfighters' disaster and spread of repression which was touched off by the tsar. To this day the January Uprising is variously received and it is a subject of discussion raged over not only by historians but also Internet users. Because of this fact Internet users on many historian's internet forums have many attitudes which are the cause of the research. Content analysis method was used to examine the problem. The categories described were extracted based on Internet users' answers.

Keywords: January Revolt, internet forum, post, Internet users, attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

The January Uprising belongs to the one of the latest flurry of nationalities in Polish history. It lasted from 22 of January 1863 till spring 1864. In spite of this fact, in some places the fights took place till 1865. The uprising covered the whole of the Polish Kingdom, Lithuania, Belarus and some parts of Ukraine. The cause of the uprising was the intensified politics of Aleksander Wielki, the announcement of forced conscription into the army, strengthening of Russian oppression and creation of two parties with different points of view: "the red ones" and "the white ones". "The white ones" were supporters of organic work and forced by legal concessions to the authorities. "The red ones" sought to induce the uprising and connect it to reforms. To achieve their goals they created an underground state. Many Poles arrived to help struggling countrymen. Despite their weak arms they were ready to face the might of the Russian army. Unfortunately, the fight for the liberation of the motherland brought disaster. The effects of the uprising were: the severity of Russification, the descent of many Polish families to Siberia and the liquidation of the autonomy of the Kingdom, which came to be known as the Kraj Nadwiślański (Sienkiewicz, 2005).

The word "history" is a word derived from the Greek language translated as "knowledge test" (Encyclopedia PWN). This is the science that describes the events having an impact on human life, customs and tradition of Nations, the development of culture, politics, economy and societies, discoveries and inventions made changes over the centuries. This means that the January Uprising is classified as an historical event.

The events of the past are always the subject of discussion. They are also discussed among Internet users. To this end, the research was carried out to determine the attitudes of Internet users to the January Uprising. These researches were carried out on discussion internet forums. According to Bronislaw Siemieniecki an internet discussion forum is one "moved to the structure of Web pages, a popular form of discussion group, for the exchange of information and points of view with the use of a Web browser. Forums are powerful scripts based on CGI, PHP, ASP, carried out by the majority of Web portals. (...) The basis for the implementation of the learning process by using groups, lists and forums is the ability for free exchange of information and views within the context of work on specific projects. Use of the power of the Internet allows for interaction between the participants in the educational process "(Siemieniecki, 2007). In this case, as I have previously mentioned, it was about these forums that relate to history. The post is a specified note containing a message or opinion on a specific topic. In this case, it was all about posts in which were contained the ratio of Internet users on the issue of uprising.

Discussion forums allow us to get to know the point of views of other people and new facts that may affect the creation of a particular opinion about the phenomenon, as well as to enrich our knowledge and argument. So the forums meet the communication function, which is the exchange of information and views on the subject, and also serve as a tool for conscious and intentional communication, because every human action is guided by specific themes (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2002). On these forums you must meet the following conditions: Discussions should be based on literature and other sources, which means that they should be substantial in nature, and questions should be open-ended for each Internet user. It is important to Internet users to quote the point of views of other people, have relied on the specified source. On the forums you should not interpret someone's opinion in any way, and not to manipulate the presentation of information in a false light. Each user has the right to present their own point of view, the aspect of not offending and not provoking the other panelists. You must also keep in mind that it is important to assertiveness, and evaluation is subject to only the project itself. Each of the messages should be directed exclusively to the thematic groups, which are interested in the issue (Siemieniecki, 2007).

B. Siemieniecki also faces the following distribution of forums :

- **Anonymous**, where registration is not required,
- **PartlyAnonymous** where anonymous users are admitted without having to confirm their identities (for example only e-mail address is required),
- **Strict** on which registration and confirmation of the e-mail address is necessary

- **Private** are directed to a specific group of Internet users, to which other people do not have access,
- **Flat**-forums in which chronologically or alphabetically threads are sorted,
- **Structured**-where the administrator creates a structure consisting of one or several layers (Siemieniecki, 2007).

In our research in the search engine we typed the keyword: “January Uprising historical forum”, and it displayed a couple of forums on the subject of history. We selected three forums: historycy.org, rebelya.pl and forum.historia.pl, which are restrictive forums, flat and structured forums. From the forum historycy.org posts from the thread “The impact of the January Uprising in history” was examined, from the forum rebelya.pl the thread “Magdalena Gawin: what did the uprising give to us?” was examined, and from forum.historia.pl two threads were examined: “Gloria victis” and “Balance of the January Uprising”. Internet users were not only teachers, but also learners, students, secretaries, etc. Many users were also pupils or students. The origin of the nicknames of Internet users, could not be explained

Stanislaw Skorupa, Halina Auderska and Zofia Lempicka find, historicity is a “recognition of something for historical treatment of something” (Skorupka, Auderska, & Lempicka, 1969). On the basis of it, on the one hand, Internet users cite the specific events, their causes and effects, as well as on specific sources and on the other hand, based on their thoughts express their opinions.

RESEARCH ISSUES

Researches were carried out in the interpretative paradigm (Malewski, 1997 p. 18-20). The method used was content analysis, which Earl Babbie has defined as “the study of registered human communication (Babbie, 2003, p. 362). The analysis was aimed at answering the question “what are the attitudes of Internet users to the January Uprising?”. Specification of the main problem were the following questions:

- What emotions were expressed by the creators of the posts?
- What arguments regarding the uprising were quoted by Internet users?

For the unit of analysis, A selection of posts was dictated by the appearance of a specific reflection on the January Uprising.

Analysis of posts did not cover:

- Posts in which contents were nationalist and chauvinistic
- posts with topics that relate to individual events related to the uprising,
- Posts from discussion about articles related to the uprising,
- Posts from forums typical filtering (due to the fact that it was only the content of posts),
- Posts referring to a particular link.

We then reviewed several forums and decided to use those in which the subject of the January Uprising was heavily discussed. The last step was to extract on the basis of the posts where three cases were taken into consideration the clarity of expression, educational value and argument. After the exhaustion of

causes, the list was limited to the three forums (historycy.org, forum.historia.org, rebelya.pl.).

METHOD AND DETERMINING THE CATEGORY

A post is a specific type of transport meaning where the sender (the Internet user) expresses his opinion (by post) on the subject by posting it for other users (other users). As already has been mentioned discussion forums relate to fans of particular themes or scientific topics. Here it was all about the “fans” of history and to each of them a specific Internet user posted including discussion at the same time.

Posts on the particular subject as well as other texts can be seen by checking which style is written, what is important and what is its frame (Paluchowski, 2000). Thanks to this we are able to determine what kind of attitude authors take on a specific event.

During research the way of the interpretation called “Verstehen” (understanding) was used. This research philosophy was introduced by Dithley Thomas, and it consists in the fact that “the investigator must be able to adopt comprehensively the circumstances, point of views and feelings of subjects studied in order to be able to properly interpret their actions” (Babbie, 2002). This interpretation has proved to be useful during the survey of Internet users on the January Uprising and their accompanying feelings. This allows you to understand their points of view and their way of argumentation. The focus was primarily on those entries that, as far as possible, reflected on the attitude to the January Uprising.

The type of analysis unit which has been established is a statement that can be user’s specific views and attitude.

The names of the category “emerged” from the analysis of the posts in which was clearly specified the ratio of Internet users to the January Uprising and its effects, given the case, citation of historical facts and the reactions of other users. On this basis, I analyzed the attitude of each Internet user.

During the research process four categories were set, which were based on the analysis carried out. All attitudes are specified by the investigator and prescribed on the basis of the analysis. For example, if the author acknowledged that the January Uprising was unnecessary, broke Poles and brought devastating consequences, and he argues that these facts delayed the process of recovering independence by Poland, it was referred to as sceptical.

The attitude here is understood as the opinion in relation to the specific situation. Opinion is «the belief about something, the view on a matter» (sjp.pwn.pl.). The task was to try to read the message from the perspective of the recipient.

After analyzing the content of posts, the following attitudes of Internet users emerged:

1. **Symphatiser** -finding the positive effects of the Uprising (13 people).
2. **The Sceptic** - recognizing that the uprising was unnecessary and brought negative effects (17 persons).

3. **Alter ego**-recurring to the later and current events, linking the past with the present (8 people).
4. **Expert**-knowledge of facts about the uprising, references to literature, culture, and customs (29 people)
5. **Dilettante**-ignorance of the events, or residual knowledge about them. Insulting or deriding other users (8 people).

Categories were distinguished on the basis of the read and analysed posts. The categories of “sympathizer” and “sceptic” have been distinguished in accordance with their opinions on the uprising. Category “alter ego” emerged from references to subsequent events. The category of “neutral expert” was established on the basis of his historical knowledge and other sources (such as literature, painting). The category of “dilettante” was established on the basis of comments from people who liked provoking others and adding nothing to the discussion. Part of the Internet users was assigned to the two categories.

Below are presented users’ description attitudes on historical forums as message senders:

1. Sympathizer -considers that despite the defeat of the January Uprising, it was a positive in the spirit of liberation during the period. That burst had a further impact on the situation of the Polish State at a later stage in the revival of the Republic. Person number 1 claiming that consequences for Russia brought the events of the years 1863-1864 (for example the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867). Person number 2 position argues that for example. “the sound of scythes had an impact on the morale of the enemy and caused mental anxiety”. And person number 3 states that “the victims incurred did not go down the drain”, which tries to remind other Internet users about his argumentation. For the sympathizer, the uprising was correct due to the Russification and oppression of the Poles by the Tsarist regime. They feel pride and admiration for the insurgents. One of the internet users argues that the burst of spirit should stay and keep hope alive for the Polish nation. Another Internet user stated that “the Russian army was a “colossus on clay legs”, and yet another the Poles could not be silent when tsarist soldiers were breaking off their peaceful and patriotic manifestations. A sympathizer assigned to the January Uprising as a sacrificial struggle for existence of the nation and the Polish language and a national identity. In his opinion this event contributed to the increase of patriotism and further struggles for Poland.

2. The Sceptic is a person who finds that the uprising was unnecessary and should not have happened. For this reason, he feels shame and frustration as to why it could not be prevented. Dictators of the uprising, some serfs, nobles and burghers person number 1 makes all of them feel guilty that for needlessly spilt blood. In turn, person number 2 deplors the death of “the flower of Polish youth”, which otherwise could guide our lives. The little awareness of Polish society on it all makes him angry. The Sceptic indicates the senselessness of the January uprising, because the Tsar, even without the uprising, was able to reform the system. The person defined as sceptic is relying on such facts as: lack of funding from abroad (England and France), using the scythes as weapons,

banishment to Siberia or forced immigration. He undermines the sense of guerrilla operations during this period, even going so far as to argue that no guerrilla forces were able to win. He strongly criticises the commanders, their lack of preparation for the uprising, inappropriate military strategy, lack of flow of information and the coordination of branches, the lack of regular troops and armament. For example, the scythe "was" an absurd weapon in the hands of insurgents, and the commanders did not follow "common sense" sending soldiers armed with agricultural tools. The sceptic cites the November Uprising, where there were regular troops, and the military staff was experienced in Napoleon's campaign. According to the sceptic an uprising could have exploded at a later period, possibly it could have taken other measures towards independence or to get autonomy back (e.g. policy Tsar Alexander II, the Poles were able to take a bloodless cultural coup). The Sceptic expresses fear of the near future and prefers that events of 1863 did not occur in the present, as well as he would not like to be their direct witness.

3. Alter ego-writes about the uprising, however, with reference to the current geopolitical situation (for example, criticism of the current Polish system of carrying out reforms) or events from the second half of the 20th century (e.g. the terrorist activities of the Irish Republican Army). A discussion about the uprising gave him a determinant of current times. This is a person who is disappointed by the former and current situation. For him the modern Poland has the same weakness as the 19th century, politically and economically. For example, he writes that the Uprising is a shame due to the fact that the action was very badly conducted and aimed to draw the attention of the Western powers of "business as usual" and no interest in Polish affairs. Alter ego believes that previous and current failures of the nation make him sad, as well as other citizens do. The reference to modern times is repeated in a cycle for alter ego. He can be described as a frustrated person, being tired because of the monotony of everyday life and the lack of prospects for the future without a time frame. Like the sceptic he or she expresses fears for tomorrow.

4. Expert- has a relatively neutral opinions and refers to the different facts of the uprising. He/she knows them very thoroughly. The expert also discusses in detail the guerrilla tactics and indicates the most important methods of combating it and uses the details of battles and skirmishes and guerrilla troops deployment. He estimates the number of weapons and troops. Expert 1 refers to the different types of historical sources, so that other people can acquire knowledge about the uprising, or would refer to specialised literature (such as the description of Nicholas Berg's fear of imperial soldiers against scythemen). The expert has a large knowledge of issues related to the uprising (e.g. wearing of black jewelry by Polish women or tales about treasures hidden during the uprising). He/she indicates the suggestions (e.g. painting or literature). This is a lettered person. He/she is trying to draw attention to himself/herself by the knowledge. The facts that he/she found out about let him/her use it to a greater extent than sympathizers or skeptics as a reason to bring something to the discussion. One of the experts is knowledgeable about the hierarchy in the Tsar's Army (such

as mentions about creating the Office Policmajstra-General of the Kingdom of Poland in 1863 and the calling to the Office Gen. Fyodor Triepowa or about tasks for 3rd eyre of the gendarmerie). The expert is an intellectual and a scholar. He/she evaluates the January Uprising “in the cold” - nor criticizing nor praising. The most important things for the expert are the facts that have been confirmed by various scientific researches, which have been documented and have survived to this day.

5. The dilettante is a person who has limited knowledge of the uprising, or in general knows nothing and belittles some facts. His/her arguments do not bring anything new to the discussion. The dilettante promotes himself/herself by being the center of attention. His/her posts are characterized by the lack of professionalism and knowledge of the topic (for example, he/she believes that the areas lost by Poland were not characterized by liberalization policy towards Tsar). The dilettante writes them to distract the other Internet users from a fair discussion. The person uses inappropriate language, which interferes with the readability of expression (for example, one of the Internet users used the term “liberal Russia”, which is untrue, because Russia has never been liberal). This person often writes posts that are not related to the topic of the thread. He/she likes to provoke others to quarrel and make “havoc” into discussion. In order to highlight her/his presence, the person uses emoticons and exclamation marks, or writes in capital letters. The Dilettante is a person who has a specific kind of relationship to the uprising, but he/she is not able to support a particular argument. Not to trust anyone and culture and this is the reason for getting a warning, or blocked account.

CONCLUSIONS

The content of the discussion forums to be analyzed was primarily text. But I focused on the texts written by the authors but not the texts to which Internet users posted links. At the same time, we should mention that the analysis of hypertext would require a differently organized research.

Contacts between Internet users were open because they were based on an exchange of opinion. In this way, each Internet user revealed his/her attitude towards the January Uprising. Each of the users speaks his/her own sensations and sentences that were received differently by others. From the collected material, it can be concluded that each of the authors of the posts uses a number of ways to interpret the relevance of the outbreak of the uprising.

In addition to the Internet users about the uprising the theme is discussed in the articles and to a small extent the lessons of history. It should be noted that the users of the forums are for the most part both passionate about the 19th century, and throughout history (with the exception of dilettantes). These people have a lot of knowledge of the facts of the Polish partitions (such as battles, the deployment of Russian and Polish troops, the larger and the smaller guerrilla skirmishes, the social hierarchy, as well as customs prevailing at the time).

It is worth mentioning, that attitude is strongly associated with viewpoint. Expressing their opinions, Internet users presented their benchmark and partial-

ly justified themselves to different political, social and economic determinants. According to Marcin Kula: "it is tempting to say that the story was also a point of reference in our in-depth reflection on the present – to show otherness and volatility, on the one hand, and on the other to show the phenomena or with very slow variation. It is tempting to, that it would be the point of reference for contesting the claim that any current state would be "the ultimate" condition, and adopted solution would be hands down only one. It is tempting to, in order to become a reference point for challenging the notion of "normality", and the thesis about achieving the end of evolution. It is tempting in total that history would be a reference point for more in-depth reflection on the volatility – the human and the times in which it would come to live. However such an approach is not unfortunately the frequent one" (Kula, 2004, p. 175). To sum up the past is inextricably linked to the present and the future. History can be likened to "film strip". The background can be changed, but the problems remain the same. The cycle remains the same. I should add that the users of the analyzed forums came out of the above assumptions and schema.

I believe that analysis of content in a research of attitudes of Internet users who use the discussion forums, should be regarded as a leading method. Given the qualitative nature of this research it should be repeated and expanded, in order to draw new conclusions about attitudes.

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